



# Maine Equal Justice

People Policy Solutions

## Maine Equal Justice testimony in opposition to LD 34 "An Act to Require a Person to Show Photographic Identification for the Purpose of Voting"

Monday, February 6, 2023

10am

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and members of the Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. Maine Equal Justice is a nonprofit civil legal aid and economic justice organization working to increase economic security, opportunity, and equity for people in Maine. We oppose LD 34.

In our 25 year history, we've supported hundreds of low-income community members to register to vote. These efforts couldn't have happened without the work of generations before us who fought and died for the right to vote, especially those in the Black freedom movement and the women's suffrage movement. The struggle to protect the right to vote isn't history, however, it is right now in the present with state level efforts across the country to make voting harder for people. The results of efforts like LD 34 are the disenfranchisement of eligible voters from marginalized groups, poor people, seniors, and rural people.

LD 34 is a departure from historic efforts to eliminate barriers to voting; it would bring Maine backwards in ensuring access to all eligible voters at the polls. We oppose LD 34, An Act to Require a Person to Show Photographic Identification for the Purpose of Voting, for the following reasons:

LD 34 does not acknowledge how economic realities, systemic racism and prejudice, and inefficient systems lead to voter disenfranchisement. We want to work with the Maine legislature to make sure that all people have a voice and can fully participate in our democracy; that income, race, gender, geography, and ability does not determine someone's access to one of the most important rights in our democracy, a fundamental civil right: the right to vote.

LD 34 is discriminatory. The right to vote shouldn't come with barriers. Maine already has a comprehensive voter registration process where people must first prove their identity, citizenship, and residency to register to vote. Requiring those who can't afford a Maine State ID or don't have a license to also request a Secretary of State issued voter ID, after they've already gone through the process of registering and verifying their identity, is absurd and overly burdensome. This is not sound public policy. Photo ID has been shown to deter eligible voters in other states, with a disproportionate impact on Black voters. Let's learn from the places that have implemented it, keep Maine's voting system secure and efficient and vote no on LD 34.

Finally, there is no evidence of impersonation in Maine at the polls. Voter ID measures do nothing in terms of election security. Their main effect is to add more costs, red tape and burdens to our elections and to turn eligible voters away. Policies that work best for the communities we serve are low-barrier and accessible by design.

Our voting system here in Maine is regarded as one of the strongest in the country. With new technology, policy makers can address the barriers to voting Maine people face when they are at risk of disenfranchisement. There is a growing movement for e-government that simplifies everyday people's interactions with the government, saves money and improves people's lives. <sup>1</sup> Once new eligible voters provide an ID when registering, they should show up to the polls without worry. If proponents really wanted to strengthen Maine's safe and secure elections, they could advocate for ongoing absentee voting, increased support for election workers, additional funding for state and local election administrators to have sufficient trained staff, and other updates to modernize our elections.

Please vote "ought not to pass" on LD 34.

Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> Code for America (2020). *What if all government services were this good.* <https://www.codeforamerica.org/>.